

Wycombe had to struggle hard to beat Clapton

Sports Mail Special Report

CLAPTON 1 : WYCOMBE WAND. 2

BOTTOM of the Isthmian League Clapton surprised Wycombe Wanderers at the Old Spotted Dog ground this afternoon by their first-half attacking football and Wanderers were glad to be level at half-time. Wycombe had the better of a second-half struggle, however, and Ashby gave them the lead with his second goal.

Clapton: McAlpine; Wilkinson, Hayward; Walsh, Hill, Amas; Roe, Seaborne, Pope, Norcott, Pasmore.

Wycombe Wanderers: Brown; Beck, Lewis; Thomas, Fisher, Atkins; Rockell, Ashby, Bates, Trott, Murphy.

Referee: B. R. Copp.

Clapton began in very lively form, and the Wycombe defence was soon in trouble. Beck cut off one menacing movement, and when Pasmore's hard centre rocketted off Fisher's shoulder Brown made a remarkable but lucky save.

Enthusiastic Clapton deserved their lead when after five minutes POPE chased a long, through ball and beat Brown with a crisp ground shot.

Bates, who was wandering freely, broke through the Clapton defence in a burst of brisk passing with Trott, but a fine tackle by Amos stopped what had seemed a certain goal.

Wanderers settled down to constructive attacking, and Clapton's defence showed signs of cracking. Hill headed a Thomas cross out of his goalkeeper's hands but just wide of goal.

Thomas stayed upfield and after 17 minutes sent ASHBY careering through for a deserved equaliser.

The softer ground certainly gave Paul Bates a new lease of life. He was proving much too elusive for Hill.

After the early thrills the game became rather scrappy and some wild Wycombe clearances, particularly by Atkins,

riled the crowd.

Ten Wycombe players lined up in front of Brown, who charged down one free kick, just outside the penalty area.

To break the monotony, full-back Beck strode past three defenders before being stopped. Clapton escaped and Murphy's centre crossed harmlessly over the face of the goal.

Clapton faced a serious rally just before half-time and Brown made a succession of fine saves.

Half-time: Clapton 1. Wycombe 1.

Both teams battled hard for the vital breakthrough but the defences were very sound under pressure.

The Wanderers, who had switched Beck and Atkins, owed a great deal to goalkeeper Ken Brown, whose handling was impeccable.

Wanderers kept up a steady attack but managed comparatively few shots. Long-range efforts rarely worried goalkeeper McAlpine.

The persistent Ashby flung himself forward to head Rockell's centre but McAlpine saved easily. The same two Wycombe forwards combined again within seconds and ASHBY lobbed Wanderers into a 78th minute lead which they had no difficulty in holding.

RESULT

CLAPTON 1
WYCOMBE 2

ASHBY STARS FOR WYCOMBE

Clapton 1 Wycombe W. 2

CENTRE - FORWARD Paul Bates, right-winger Mike Rockell, and inside-right Ivor Ashby were the stars of Wycombe Wanderers. Isthmian League win at Clapton.

Bates, playing a deep lying game, kept his line going continually, and it was a triumph of a team against individuals.

Clapton leader Ken Pope beat advancing Wycombe Wanderers goalkeeper Brown with a shot from 15 yards out in the fifth minute.

But the Wycombe attack had been moving well, even though finishing was weak, and 12 minutes later Ashby levelled the scores.

Clapton were back in the game before half time and Brown only just managed to pull down one 30yd. drive from Clapton half-back Brian Walsh.

Wycombe's half backs took control in the second half and after 78 minutes Ashby took advantage of a pass by Bates to lob the ball over McAlpine's head from close in.

The winners' powerful and fast moving forwards were always menacing, but Clapton defence was strong under steady pressure.